

Why are kids worried about bullying?

Bullying is the number one concern for children aged 8-15 years in the United States. In Australia, 16% of students report being bullied every day.

Childhood ought to be a time for experiencing joy and delight. It should be a time when we learn how valued and treasured we are as people— a time when we get excited about the world around us and all the possibilities it holds. It shouldn't be a time filled with anxiety and fear. Yet for many of our children, going to school can be a very troubling experience. For over half of them, their worries about bullying are not just vague fears. They are fears based on the children's own experiences of what they see happening in their schools.

Most kids in the United States say that they want to know more about bullying. They initiate conversations with their parents on the topic more often than their parents do. The trouble is 40% of these kids admit that they don't remember what their parents say (*Kaiser Family Foundation, 2000*).

So why are the kids worried about bullying? Isn't it just a normal part of growing up? The sad truth is that your kids are likely to have to deal with bullying at some stage during their schooling. At the very least they are likely to witness others being bullied. Once they leave school and move into the workplace, they are even more likely to experience bullying. Studies in the United Kingdom and Australia have shown that almost 50% of adults experience verbal bullying during their working lives.

Our communities are becoming angrier places. You've probably noticed the increased media attention on hostile behaviour like in road rage or hostile work environments. More and more often these days, you'll hear about bullying on the radio, read about it in the newspaper, or see a television program about it. We are becoming more aware of just how widespread and common bullying is in our neighbourhoods, our workplaces and our schools.

Understanding your children's fears is the first important step in being able to reassure them that you are there to help. There are many reasons why kids get anxious about bullying. They see others being bullied and worry that they could be next. They report it to teachers or parents and get little effective support or protection. They see the bullies get away with it and mistakenly believe that nothing can be done to stop it. It can and it is.

Get the facts

Bullywise™ parents take the time to talk to their kids about the bullying facts below and how they feel about them. They don't wait until there's a problem to discuss these either!

§ It happens every day

Bullying is so frequent that 16% of students surveyed by the Gatehouse Project in Australia reported being bullied every day (*DET, Vic, 2004*). In Australia in 2005 there were 3,248,139 students enrolled. Sixteen percent of them equals 535,702. That's a lot of children bullied each day!

§ It happens every week

Estimates of how many children are bullied at school weekly vary depending on the way the research is conducted. Some important research has shown that as many as 20% of boys and 18% of girls aged 8-17 years are bullied each week at school (*Rigby, 1996*).

§ It happens everywhere

The school size and whether the school is in a rural, suburban or urban setting do not make any difference to whether bullying will occur or not. Neither does it matter whether it is a state or non-state school. Bullying happens in all types of schools everywhere (*ERIC, 1997*). More recent research found that single-sex schools are not immune and confirmed the earlier findings (*DEST, ACT 2003*).

In fact, bullying is a widespread phenomenon. World-wide no study shows a school with an absence of bullying (*Rigby, 2001*).

The presence of bullying does not make the school, or kindergarten or wherever it occurred, bad and the down the road where there isn't any bullying (that is, it's not reported!) good. What counts is how effectively the bullying is stopped. Developing a positive community where individuals are valued and respected means that the bullying will not be tolerated by anyone, wherever it happens.

§ It happens to kids of all ages

Bullying increases throughout primary school, peaks in the middle school/junior high school years and declines in senior high school (*ERIC, 1997*). The main age for bullying is between the ages of 10-14 years. That doesn't mean that kids outside this age group won't experience bullying. They may. Bullying can happen in families, in child care, in kindergartens, in schools, in sports groups, or even in church groups. Virtually anywhere that people gather has the potential for bullying to occur. Very young children and those in their late teens also experience bullying, but it's not as common – that's all we can confidently say.

© Lyndall Horton-James 2004
The Soaring Phoenix

Ph/Fax: +61 3 94020756
100 Royal Parade RESERVOIR VIC Australia 3073
Email: info@thesoaringphoenix.com.au

Bullying Prevention – Parent Fact Sheet 3

More facts!

Here are more facts for Bullywise™ parents to discuss with their kids. Remember to stress how you feel about them. It's a good idea to read it first yourself!

§ **It's the #1 concern for kids in the USA**

Bullying is the number one concern for children aged 8-15, followed by related concerns about discrimination and violence (*Kaiser Family Foundation, 2000*). These worries increase with age, so that 12-15 year olds are even more worried about bullying, discrimination and violence than kids aged 8-11 years (*Kaiser Family Foundation, 2000*). In Australia, 54% of Year 7 students don't feel safe at school according to the *Alannah and Madeline Foundation (2003)*.

§ **Bullying involves a huge number of children**

In the USA 40% of kids in grades 6 to 12 admit that they have threatened other kids. It's not surprising then to find that 75% of adolescents in the United States report that they have been bullied (*Louisiana Child Caring Foundation*). In Australia 44% of students say they have been teased, 21% say that rumours were spread about them, 14.5% say they were socially excluded and 12.5% report being physically threatened or hurt (*DET, Vic, 2004*).

§ **Kids see others getting bullied**

Witnessing bullying, or knowing that bullying is going on, makes other children worry that they could be the next target. Almost 75% of 8-11 year olds in America say that kids at their school get bullied (*Kaiser Family Foundation, 2000*). Canadian research found that a staggering 85% of primary aged children watched a bullying event happen and did nothing (*Rigby, Johnson & Blake, 2004*).

§ **Kids don't always believe that adults will help**

Students often think adults do little to help. They think parents only talk about it in a limited way. Many believe that reporting bullying to the school will only make it get worse. Students say that teachers rarely talk to their classes about bullying (*ERIC, 1997*).

§ **Bullies can be friends, families or foes**

Many people think that bullies are always enemies. But they can just as easily be buddies, brothers and sisters or even cousins. Bullywise™ parents understand that the bullies may be in their own families and keep an eye out for any signs that bullying may be happening at home, or amongst members of the extended family.

© Lyndall Horton-James 2004
The Soaring Phoenix

Ph/Fax: +61 3 94020756
100 Royal Parade RESERVOIR VIC Australia 3073
Email: info@thesoaringphoenix.com.au

What is bullying?

There are many definitions of bullying. These key ideas help us to grasp what bullying really is. As a parent, understanding these ideas will help you explain things to your children and allow you to make informed decisions.

§ **Bullying is an abuse of power.**

People have different kinds of power – even kids. Being bigger, stronger, older, smarter, more articulate, more self-confident, or having a group of followers are all types of power that children have. When these forms of power are used against others to control, reject, or frighten them, the bullies are abusing their power. If this mistreatment is repeated, the target or victim is being bullied.

§ **Bullying is hostile or aggressive behaviour that harms the victim.**

Sometimes this aggression can be very subtle, such as excluding a child from playing with a group. Sometimes it appears to be relatively harmless, like name calling or teasing about the child's appearance. As a parent you need to be aware that even mild abuse repeated often over a long period of time causes the same damage as a 'war wound'. Forget the old saying that 'names will never hurt me'. Some of the most damaging bullying takes the form of relentless name calling or teasing. It's a bit like water torture. It wears the victim down.

§ **Bullying thrives in a climate of secrecy and fear.**

Victims of bullying, whether children or adults, often do not tell anyone that they are being mistreated until it gets to the point where they can no longer cope. They mistakenly believe that if they go along with what the bully wants, that will be the end of the matter. When the bullying continues and gets worse, the victims then become fearful of rocking the boat. They think that the bully will retaliate if they complain or report the behaviour. Their fear snowballs and they suffer in silence, robbing themselves of the chance to put an end to the torment. Getting the mistreatment out in the open and reporting it are two vital steps in putting an end to bullying.

§ **Bullying is repeated negative behaviour towards someone else.**

Bullying is not a one-off case. A one-off case is really a conflict. Bullying is much more than a conflict over some issue. It happens over and over again. It's this relentless nature of bullying that wears people down. Sometimes the form of the bullying changes, for example, name calling may change to threatening someone or destroying their belongings. Some victims have reported being mistreated in several different ways by the same bullies.

© Lyndall Horton-James 2004

The Soaring Phoenix

Ph/Fax: +61 3 94020756

100 Royal Parade RESERVOIR VIC Australia 3073

Email: info@thesoaringphoenix.com.au

Types of Bullying

Bullying takes many forms. It's difficult to list every possible bullying behaviour, so knowing the groups of common types of bullying can help us to quickly identify bullying when it happens. There are many ways of categorising bullying behaviour, but the easiest to remember are these 3 groups:

1. Verbal
2. Non-verbal
3. Physical

1. Verbal bullying

This is the most common form of bullying. Most other kinds of bullying will also involve some verbal abuse.

Verbal bullying includes:

Name calling, chanting rhymes about someone, teasing, sarcasm, snide remarks, put downs and humiliating jokes, derision, unfair or unjustified criticism, rumours, yelling and threats.

2. Non-verbal bullying

Non-verbal bullying can be very difficult for a child to deal with. It is usually very subtle and sly, making it difficult for others to notice what is going on. What makes its discovery even more difficult is that non-verbal bullying is often done in secret with no witnesses. At other times it is carried out by groups, all of whom participate or else stay silent about what's happening.

Non-verbal bullying includes:

Disrespectful or aggressive facial expressions or rude gestures, giving victims the cold shoulder by not speaking to them, displaying derogatory pictures aimed at the victim, excluding or isolating others, unfair workloads (e.g. making the victim do all the work), giving the victim meaningless or difficult tasks to do, e.g. cutting the lawn with a pair of scissors, and stalking.

3. Physical bullying

Many parents automatically think of physical bullying whenever bullying is mentioned, so it's important for you to know about all types of bullying.

Physical bullying includes:

Taking someone's toys or belongings, breaking someone's toys or belongings, forcing someone to hand over their money, messing up their work, stand over tactics or invading personal space and making physical contact such as punching, pushing, hitting, shoving, grabbing, tripping, shaking, poking, pinching, or spitting.

Beware: Many children will claim that bullying "was only a joke".

© Lyndall Horton-James 2004
The Soaring Phoenix

Ph/Fax: +61 3 94020756

100 Royal Parade RESERVOIR VIC Australia 3073

Email: info@thesoaringphoenix.com.au

What you need to know about bullying

Before you can fix any problem you have to know what you are dealing with. Knowing the facts about bullying gives you with some clear indications about what will be effective in stopping it and what won't. Today we're going to focus on one important fact.

No one is born a bully

All of us have the potential to be a bully or a victim, given the right circumstances. While few of us become either a Hitler or a Mother Teresa, we need to understand that human nature provides us with both positive and negative drives. Blaming people, particularly children, for being either a bully or a victim ignores this potential that is in each one of us.

Bullying is largely learned behaviour. It might be behaviour that is learnt at home, at kindergarten, or at school. Most children try out being a bully at some time during their childhood. Experimenting with different ways of interacting with people is a normal part of children's social development. However, for most children, bullying behaviour is shortlived.

The majority of children abandon bullying behaviour early on because they don't like the consequences it brings. Hurting people they like, losing friends, feeling bad about themselves, receiving adult disapproval and suffering punishment are all good reasons that motivate the majority of children to choose to treat people kindly instead.

We need to put bullying into perspective. The issue is not that the people who bully others are bad people. It's their behaviour that is unacceptable, not them as people. They have learnt to use inappropriate ways of dealing with others. They use negative behaviour to get what they want. The significant thing about negative learned behaviour is that it can be changed. Bullies can learn to behave in more positive ways. The challenge is to help those who are bullying others to learn more acceptable ways of interacting. That's what the school is for.

It's very important that you talk with your child's school as soon as you think there might be bullying going on. Don't make accusations. Maybe they don't know yet. Just be concerned and try to get the facts.

© Lyndall Horton-James 2004
The Soaring Phoenix

Ph/Fax: +61 3 94020756
100 Royal Parade RESERVOIR VIC Australia 3073
Email: info@thesoaringphoenix.com.au

What you need to know about bullying

Continuing our parent series on bullying, this week we're focusing on knowledge that might help you understand more about this perplexing problem.

§ **Some bullying is accidental**

Accidental bullies are unaware of the hurt they are inflicting on their targets. They may not realise that their words and actions are causing pain. They often think that it's only a joke. Indeed, many children think it's only a joke because of their narrow perspectives. Once the hurt is made clear to them, accidental bullies are often genuinely sorry about their behaviour. This kind of bullying is the easiest to stop, because it grows of ignorance rather than malice.

§ **Some bullying is deliberate**

On the other hand, being a deliberate bully gets the bullies something they want. This might be anything from someone's lunch money, to their belongings, to a gang of people who will do their bidding. Deliberate bullies often mistake fear for respect. To stop deliberate bullying, we need to make it clear that the behaviour is unacceptable and that the bullies will be held responsible for their actions. Your child's school is best able to do this.

§ **Bullies need help too**

Some children continue to use bullying throughout middle childhood and on into adolescence. While their peers are developing social skills and learning how to negotiate with others, these children rely on just one 'gear'. They use force to get their way and solve their problems with aggression.

If they haven't modified their bullying behaviour by the time they reach their early twenties, these people tend to be on a negative life path. Studies show that this is likely to include broken relationships, work difficulties, and even prison sentences.

Bullies need our compassion and our help every bit as much as the victims do. We need to recognise that bullying behaviour does not need to be a life sentence. It's the bullying behaviour that's bad, not the person.

What you need to know about bullying

Here are some more things you need to know about bullying, especially its likely effect in later life.

§ Without victims, there are no bullies

Until someone who will act as the victim shows up, the bully has no one to pick on. Like being a bully, being a victim is also learned behaviour. The victims have mistakenly learnt that they are powerless. They have not learned how to stand up for themselves by being assertive. They have not learned how to use the power of others to gain support and assistance. They have not learned to respect themselves enough to refuse to play the bullies' games of fear. Victims need to learn new behaviour just as the bullies do. They need to learn how to protect themselves and how to stake out their boundaries. It's no use just telling your child to stand up for himself or herself. It will take lots of practise.

§ Bullies and victims may be bullied in later life

There now established links between being a bully or being bullied at school and then being bullied in the workplace. An important study carried out with 5,288 adults in Britain found that the highest risk for workplace bullying was for those who had been both bullies and victims at school. It found that 10% of workers had been bullied in the previous 6 months (*P.K. Smith, 1997*).

Those who had no real strategy for dealing with bullying at school were the ones most likely to have experienced recent bullying at work. While some people who are victimised at school were not then bullied in the workplace, many were. The difference was caused by the organisational factors in the workplace.

The research suggested that those who were victimised did not use effective strategies to prevent bullying because they lacked confidence and had little social support. This highlights how essential it is to work with both the bullies and their victims at school, in order to prevent their future vulnerability to bullying. It means that schools have a responsibility not only to protect students from harmful bullying at school, but to also prepare them adequately for dealing with possible workplace bullying as well. Caring schools will include bullying awareness aspects in their curriculum programs and their work experience and pre-vocational training programs too.

© Lyndall Horton-James 2004
The Soaring Phoenix

Ph/Fax: +61 3 94020756
100 Royal Parade RESERVOIR VIC Australia 3073
Email: info@thesoaringphoenix.com.au

Warning signs

It's a sad fact, but one you need to be aware of – your children may not tell you straight away if they are being bullied.

Here are some common reasons why kids keep quiet instead of speaking up:

- § They may not even realise that they are being bullied.
- § Kids (and adults too) often think that if they do nothing the bullying will go away. It hardly ever does.
- § Some kids are afraid that if they tell their parents, they will come up to the school and create a scene and make everything worse.
- § Some kids think that the bullying will get worse if they tell.
- § Some kids feel ashamed that they are being bullied and think that they have done something to cause it.
- § Some kids are worried that their parents will think that they're weak if they complain about being bullied.

Because your children may be reluctant to tell you if they are being bullied, you need to know the warning signs. If your child is being bullied, you may notice some of these changes:

- § Suddenly not liking school anymore
- § Missing classes
- § Can't say why they're unhappy
- § Regular unexplained bruises or cuts
- § Moody or weepy at the end of the weekend or holidays
- § Complains of not feeling well to avoid school
- § Falling standard of school work or marks
- § Wanting to be taken to school
- § Withdrawing from friends and pastimes
- § Unwillingness to join in social events
- § Broken or 'lost' belongings
- § Torn clothing
- § Being hungry from not eating lunch or 'losing' lunch money regularly
- § Asking for, or taking, extra money
- § Eating more or less than usual
- § Sleeping badly or bed-wetting
- § Getting unusually angry with brothers and sisters

If you notice any of these changes, take them seriously and talk with your child straight away about what is happening. It may or may not be bullying, but it's better to find out as soon as possible what is causing your child distress and take immediate steps to solve the problem.

© Lyndall Horton-James 2004
The Soaring Phoenix

Ph/Fax: +61 3 94020756
100 Royal Parade RESERVOIR VIC Australia 3073
Email: info@thesoaringphoenix.com.au

What to do about bullying

Here are the Top Five Tips for talking to children about bullying.

1. Initiate conversations with your child about bullying

Don't wait for your child to raise the issue before you mention it. By the time your child comes to you with a concern, he or she may be very worried or upset by a real life bullying problem at school. To avoid this you need to anticipate your children's fears about bullying and start the ball rolling yourself.

2. Start early

As soon as your child starts school start talking together about the way the kids there treat each other. Make sure your children know in advance what to do if someone tries to bully them. Remember that the earlier bullying behaviour is stopped, the less damage it is likely to cause.

3. Keep it open and friendly

Don't make it sound like a big deal. Smile a lot and be casual about it. After all, bullying is just another fact of life! Just explain that you are always available to talk about any concerns your child may have about bullying. You might like to do this several times to make sure the message sticks.

4. Explain your own values

One of the perceptions many students have is that their parents only talk to them about bullying in a limited way (*O'Leary 1993*). Make sure you explain your own views about bullying very clearly. Our children need to understand where parents stand on bullying issues.

5. Listen to your child

Try not to make any judgments about what your children say about bullying. Acknowledge their feelings and concerns. Reassure them if they sound fearful. Ask if they would like to know some other ideas or options, if their ways of dealing with bullying issues seem limited. (They usually do!)

© Lyndall Horton-James 2004

The Soaring Phoenix

Ph/Fax: +61 3 94020756

100 Royal Parade RESERVOIR VIC Australia 3073

Email: info@thesoaringphoenix.com.au

What to do about bullying

Another Top Five Tips for talking to children about bullying.

1. Try to be honest

Be prepared to admit that you don't know if your kids ask you something about bullying that you can't answer. Offer to help to find an answer by searching the internet, calling an agency, asking their school or by visiting the library together.

2. Be patient

New ideas and behaviours can take a while to become routine. If your child is afraid of bullies at school, offer all the support you can. Your children need time and encouragement to get used to new ideas, or new ways of dealing with problems.

3. Talk while doing other things

This is sometimes called 'parallel talk'. Doing everyday tasks together gives you many ideal opportunities to chat casually about bullying from time to time. This helps to make facing bullying seem like less of a big deal to your child.

4. Talk about it over and over

You'll need to re-visit your discussions with your child about bullying over and over. Once won't do it. Research shows that around 40% of children, whose parents had talked to them about bullying, couldn't recall what their parents had said (*Kaiser Family Foundation, 2001*). Don't expect a once-only message to stick.

5. Talk about the way aggression is shown on TV

Many sitcoms and other TV programs use put downs or making fun of people as a way of getting cheap laughs. Sports shows often screen fights erupting between players. Violence is frequently shown as a way of solving conflicts in movies. All these images are regularly broadcast into our homes via television and children watching them may not distinguish between reality and fantasy in the same way that an adult would. Talk to your children about the type of humour that is being used in the shows they watch, or how real people feel when others humiliate them. Ask them whether they like it when others make fun of them.

Discuss the way violence is used to show the good guy beating the bad guy in most movies. Help your children understand that what they see on TV is not always a good role model for them to copy in real life. Talk about how movie makers aim for excitement, not reality, when they create films. Talk about how the real adults in the children's lives, like their parents, grandparents or aunts and uncles, solve the problems they experience with other people.

Be aware that your child may try to get you to promise not to go to the school if there is a problem. Decide whether you want your child to suffer bullying problems BEFORE you make such a promise.

© Lyndall Horton-James 2004
The Soaring Phoenix

Ph/Fax: +61 3 94020756

100 Royal Parade RESERVOIR VIC Australia 3073

Email: info@thesoaringphoenix.com.au

If your child is being bullied– what to do:

1. Know all you can about bullying

Make sure you understand bullying and its impacts. Then you can give advice to your child or discuss a bullying situation with the school knowing that you are well-informed.

2. Listen well

Listen carefully to your child and take his or her concerns seriously.

3. Accept your child's feelings

Recognise and accept your child's feelings. Let the child know you understand how hurt he or she feels. Tell the child that these feelings are normal and healthy.

4. Feelings are warning signs too

Help the child to trust his or her feelings. It is important that children learn to take notice of the signs that something is wrong. Feeling uncomfortable, humiliated, or scared are warning signs.

5. Remove the self-blame

Make sure the child understands that he or she is not to blame for what happened and did nothing to justify the bully's behaviour.

6. Reassure the child

Reassure the child that he or she is a worthwhile person and deserves to be treated with respect.

7. Talk about what bullying really is

Explain that bullying is an attempt by the bully to control other people and boss them around.

8. Teach useful responses

Teach your child some appropriate responses to say to bullies. Assertive Communication and Personal Strategies will help.

9. Practice what to say

Role-play bullying scenarios and practice your child's responses. Talk about how our voices, bodies and faces send messages just the same way our words do.

10. Set limits

Help your child to set limits on what behaviour he or she will tolerate from others.

11. Teach problem-solving skills

Encourage your child to learn social problem solving skills, which will help him or her to deal with difficult situations. Rather than giving your child all the answers, ask what ways he or she can think of to avoid being targeted by a bully.

12. Find a buddy

It's often helpful for a child who has been bullied at school to have a bigger or older 'buddy'. Bullies are unlikely to pick on your child with a buddy present, and if they do, the trained buddy knows to report the incident immediately.

© Lyndall Horton-James 2004
The Soaring Phoenix

Ph/Fax: +61 3 94020756
100 Royal Parade RESERVOIR VIC Australia 3073
Email: info@thesoaringphoenix.com.au

If your child is being bullied– what not to do:

1. Don't dismiss the bad feelings

Don't tell your child to forget it, or not to feel hurt. Being bullied can feel very painful. Your child needs to know that you understand and care about how hurt he or she feels.

2. Don't ignore it

Don't tell children to ignore bullying. This only teaches them that bullying has to be tolerated, rather than stopped. It gives them the wrong message. What's worse is that it sets them up for further bullying in the future, because no action has been taken to stop it. Be aware that ignoring bullying doesn't make it go away. The evidence is that it usually gets worse. Your children need to learn how to stand up for themselves without hurting others. They need to learn how to tell the bullies to stop and how to tell others that they need help.

3. Don't make it OK for the bully

Don't tell your child that the bully didn't mean it, especially if the bully is a brother or sister. The intention of the bully makes no difference. The bully has caused your child pain. Saying that the bully didn't mean it is a way of making an excuse for the nasty behaviour and making it okay that your child was hurt.

4. Don't deal with the bully yourself

Don't try to deal with the bully directly yourself, unless it is another of your own children. If the bully is a member of your own family, you will need to deal separately with the bully. If your child was bullied at school, don't be tempted to confront the bully directly yourself. Report the problem to the school.

If your child was bullied by someone in your neighbourhood, talk to their parents about what is happening and ask them to speak to their child or children about it. Be very cautious about how you do this. Directly confronting the bullies' parents on your own can backfire badly and these situations can escalate into conflict between the parents over the issue.

Try to adopt a problem solving approach, rather than a blaming one. Accusing the bully's parents is only going to make them feel defensive and they may lash out at you if they feel you are attacking them. Think carefully before you act.

© Lyndall Horton-James 2004
The Soaring Phoenix

Ph/Fax: +61 3 94020756
100 Royal Parade RESERVOIR VIC Australia 3073
Email: info@thesoaringphoenix.com.au

If your child is bullying others - what to do:

1. **Understand bullying first** Before you raise the issue with your child, make sure you understand what bullying is and how it can be stopped.
2. **Model positive behaviour** Recognise that bullying others is a sign that your child needs your help. It will take more than punishment to learn more acceptable ways of treating others.
3. **Stay calm** When you raise the issue with your child, stay calm.
4. **Listen with caution** Listen carefully to your child's story, but realise that it is probably a version that has been 'cleaned up' to make the bully look good. Bullies often try to justify their actions.
5. **Love the child, hate the behaviour** You will need to make it clear to your child that you love him or her, but that you won't put up with bullying behaviour and that it has to stop.
6. **Work with the school** Talk to the child's teachers after you have spoken with the child. A positive approach taken by both the school and the home is the most effective way to stop bullying.
7. **Be a broken record – repeat yourself** Focus on encouraging your child's acceptance of people's differences. Stress how unfair it is to try to make people do things they don't want to do.
8. **Bullies are not respected** Explain to your child that continuing to bully others will mean that people won't like them or respect them.
9. **Nurture empathy** Understand that while most children know that bullying is wrong, few bullies ever appreciate just how badly their victims feel.
10. **Hold your child accountable** Make your child responsible for fixing the problem.
11. **Use praise and rewards** Let your child know how proud you are that he or she is working hard at changing the negative bullying behaviour.
12. **Check whether your child is also being bullied** Some victims of bullying will then bully others – maybe out of frustration, maybe because they think if it's happening to them, it must be OK to do it to other people.

© Lyndall Horton-James 2004
The Soaring Phoenix

Ph/Fax: +61 3 94020756
100 Royal Parade RESERVOIR VIC Australia 3073
Email: info@thesoaringphoenix.com.au

If your child is bullying others – what not to do:

1. Don't play the blame game

Don't blame yourself, the child, the school, the government or anyone else. Blaming is not going to fix the problem or change the child's behaviour. Try to use your concern in positive ways.

2. Don't expect others to fix it

Don't just rely on the school to fix the problem. The school is unlikely to be able to fix it completely without your assistance. You will need to work together with the school for any solution to be effective. More importantly your child will get the message that bullying must be okay with you, if you don't take any action to stop it yourself. Remember that saying nothing and doing nothing, means you are giving silent permission.

3. Don't ignore the problem

Don't ignore the problem, especially if the child is quite young. The earlier that bullying behaviour is nipped in the bud, the better.

4. Don't give up

Don't give up in despair. Bullying behaviour can be changed. It doesn't have to be a life sentence. Get help and support yourself if you find it tough to handle. Talk to other parents about the problem and find out how they'd deal with it. Ask a trusted friend to help you. Seek counselling or the help of a parent educator. If your child's school has a Social Worker, ask for a home visit. Sometimes just talking it over with someone who understands is all the support you need.

5. Don't get angry

Trying out bullying behaviour is a normal part of a child's development. If your child needs your help, he or she needs your help. Getting angry isn't going to help you. If you need help dealing with this problem, talk to other parents or maybe even a school counsellor. Get the help you need.

© Lyndall Horton-James 2004

The Soaring Phoenix

Ph/Fax: +61 3 94020756

100 Royal Parade RESERVOIR VIC Australia 3073

Email: info@thesoaringphoenix.com.au

Assertive communication

Assertive communication is when your facial expression, gestures, body language, tone of voice and words all communicate clearly that you are in control of yourself, that you are not going to be pushed around by others and that you intend to get what you want. It's an important skill we need to avoid being bullied.

Assertive communication:

- **is not aggressive.** It does not mean that you attempt to dominate other people by forcing your point of view on them.
- **means standing up for yourself** without hurting other people.
- **is not delivered in an angry voice**, or through clenched teeth. It is delivered calmly, firmly and clearly.
- **focuses on what you want to happen**, rather than what you don't want. It does not focus on the other person's wrong doing.

Steps for using assertive communication:

1. Take a deep breath or two to help you stay calm.
2. Let your hands hang loosely by your sides.
3. Stand up straight.
4. Keep eye contact with the person.
5. Speak clearly in a normal voice.
6. Use "I" statements to talk to the person, stating how you feel and what you want e.g. "I feel confused when you yell instructions at me. It makes me afraid that I'm going to make a mistake. I can follow your instructions a lot better when you speak to me calmly." Or ask an assertive question, such as "Do you realise that you're yelling at me?"

© Lyndall Horton-James 2004
The Soaring Phoenix

Ph/Fax: +61 3 94020756
100 Royal Parade RESERVOIR VIC Australia 3073
Email: info@thesoaringphoenix.com.au

Child strategies at school

Using these strategies will help your child to deflect any verbal abuse he or she is experiencing. They are useful to avoid antagonising the bully or having the situation escalate and become worse. When the person abusing your child is in more powerful position than they are, it's important to have strategies for protecting themselves that do not attack the bully. The strategies below work best for older children, but they do require a lot of practise with you first.

Get more information

This is useful to stop being the butt of abusive 'jokes'. Keep asking the bully for more detail and more information about the offensive remark, preferably in a loud voice, so that others can hear you. It makes the 'joke' very unfunny.

Fogging

With fogging, you simply respond with a simple statement that appears to agree with the bully, e.g. "Maybe you're right. Maybe I am incredibly slow to finish the simplest tasks." Then walk away.

I agree

Agree with everything the bully says and keep a fixed smile on your face. The plan here is to show that the bully is having no effect on you. This is very boring to a bully who is looking for a bit of excitement.

I more than agree

Agree with everything the bully says and exaggerate it. "Oh I'm more than useless, I'm absolutely useless." "Oh I'm more than fat, I'm enormous."

Use humour if you can

If possible turn the situation into a joke, but make sure that you do not poke fun at the bully. This will only make things worse.

Change the subject

This is a form of ignoring the bully, which gives the victim the final word. Ignore whatever the bully said and say something like "That reminds me of a joke I heard the other day" or "Did you see that story on 60 Minutes?"

Have the last word

Make sure you say something to the bully, rather than just passively 'take it'.

© Lyndall Horton-James 2004

The Soaring Phoenix

Ph/Fax: +61 3 94020756

100 Royal Parade RESERVOIR VIC Australia 3073

Email: info@thesoaringphoenix.com.au

What to do if you're bullied at school

If you are being bullied at school, use these 10 **Bullywise™ Personal Strategies** to protect yourself and recover:

1. **Tell someone you trust straight away** – Take action to stop the bullying as soon as you recognise it. Tell your parents and teachers. Keep on telling them until you are taken seriously.
2. **Keep a diary or log** - Write down the details of what happened including time, date, place, who said what, and who did what. Look for patterns.
3. **Understand that the bully has the real problem, not you**– Don't blame yourself if someone is bullying you. You have done nothing wrong. Bullies like to pick on nice people because they know they won't fight back.
4. **Make assertive statements** - Use assertive talk to tell the bully that you want the bullying to stop, but make sure you don't start fighting.
5. **Refuse to play the game** – Don't get sucked into the bully's nastiness. Refuse to become a victim by agreeing with what's said, or ignoring it, seeking more information, changing the subject, using humour or delays.
6. **Control your feelings**– Use deep breathing, positive self-talk, time-out, relaxing your muscles, or talking to a friend as ways to stay calm. Try hard not to let the bully see that you are upset.
7. **Find some buddies** - Tell others in your class about the bullying and ask for their help. Having some buddies to stay with you at recess and lunch time can help protect you from more bullying.
8. **Parents and teachers need to work together to stop the bullying** – If the bullying doesn't stop, ask your parents to meet with the teachers to work out a plan together for dealing with it.
9. **Learn how to deal with bullies**- Your school counsellor can help you learn new skills for dealing with bullies. These skills will help you all your life.
10. **Don't let it get to you** – Keep busy with friends, sports and activities you like to do. Make sure you have fun. Don't let the bully spoil everything.

© Lyndall Horton-James 2004
The Soaring Phoenix

Ph/Fax: +61 3 94020756
100 Royal Parade RESERVOIR VIC Australia 3073
Email: info@thesoaringphoenix.com.au

Dealing with the school

- 1. Get the facts** Before you approach the school, list all the facts as well as you know them: what happened, who was involved, where it occurred, who witnessed it, anything your child did that may have provoked the incident, whether it was a one-off or series of events.
- 2. Explain to your child** Let your child know that you intend to talk to the school. Explain how important this is. Reassure your child that it will make things better in the long run, not worse.
- 3. Make an appointment** Schools are busy places. If you arrive unexpectedly, the person you need to see may not be available, so make an appointment for a meeting.
- 4. Leave dealing with the bully to the school** Don't try to deal with the bully or the bully's parents directly yourself. Leave this to the school.
- 5. State the problem and the solution you want** Aim to work together with the school to fix the problem. Present the problem you are concerned about and say that you are seeking the school's help in finding a solution.
- 6. Avoid accusing the school** Ask questions to clarify the situation, but avoid accusing the school. Try to stay calm. Remember that teachers are usually the last to find out that bullying is happening at school. The sequence is friends first, then parents, lastly schools. Your visit may be the first time they have heard about this problem.
- 7. Ask what the school will do** Find out how the school intends to deal with the problem and what they would like you to do.
- 8. An agreed approach** Explain what you are prepared to do and try to reach an agreed approach with the school. Remember that the #1 Principle in bullying prevention is to keep the victim safe.
- 9. Be patient** Allow the school time to deal with the problem. Stay in touch with them, as a reminder.
- 10. Arrange a follow-up meeting** Find out whether the problem has been fixed and how the situation is being monitored directly from the school.

© Lyndall Horton-James 2004

The Soaring Phoenix

Ph/Fax: +61 3 94020756

100 Royal Parade RESERVOIR VIC Australia 3073

Email: info@thesoaringphoenix.com.au

Sign the Bullywise™ Pledge

By signing this pledge, you can make a commitment to play an active role in stopping bullying wherever it happens. Use it with your family, friends, work mates, club members or school

I, _____, agree to help stop bullying wherever it happens. I believe that everyone deserves to be treated with respect and dignity. I believe that everyone has a right to feel safe and to be accepted for who they are. I believe that bullying is never OK. I believe that we all have a responsibility to help stop any bullying that we know is going on.

By signing this pledge, I promise to:

- § Never bully another person on purpose.
- § Apologise immediately I am told that I have accidentally bullied someone.
- § Tell anyone bullying another person to stop.
- § Tell the person in charge if any bullying happens at school or work.
- § Help the person who was bullied.

Date: _____

Signed: _____